



THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK

A New Translation in Simple English



THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK

*A New Translation in Simple English
from the Nestlé Greek Text*

BY
EDWARD VERNON

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TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

THE way of a translator, like that of a transgressor, is hard—how hard in either case none but the initiated are aware. The translator's task is doubly hard if he is handling words that have the most sacred of associations, and trebly so if he must restrict himself to the uttermost simplicity of language.

It has for long seemed desirable that if the Bible is to win and to retain the interest of the rising generation, it should cease, in the first instance at least, to be a book of such unintelligibility that it has to be treated as another lesson book, and expounded by teachers. The Synoptic Gospels at least ought to be capable of being read with immediate interest and understanding. The ideal would be a version in which no word would be employed which could not be readily understood by the average intelligent child of twelve years

FOREWORD

and upwards, technical Jewish words such as "scribes" or "Pharisees" being covered by short explanatory phrases.

The following pages represent an effort made to deal with this situation, which has proved so successful with young minds in the author's own spheres of labor as to warrant offering it to a larger public. It would have been easy of course to have offered a mere paraphrase of the Authorized Version, but I have deemed it right to translate directly from the Greek text. The version I have used was the one prepared by Dr. Eberhard Nestlé and published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1904.

The chief difficulty was to do justice to the twin claims of naturalness and accuracy. Dr. W. H. D. Rouse observed in speaking of classical translations: "This may safely be said, that where accuracy and naturalness cannot both be attained, accuracy must be sacrificed rather." It is a test of literary instinct and perception to judge rightly when the sacrifice has to be made, but I trust that in the few instances where I have deemed it good to embellish the text to a very slight degree my occasional excursions in this regard will be held to be justified.

One does not go far in an enterprise of this sort without discovering that there are no adequate English terms, at any rate of a sufficiently simple nature, to translate several of the idioms and religious terms current in New Testament times. This is a matter which presents very real difficulties if the translation is to be more than a schoolboy's literal exercise. Besides the words "scribes" and "Pharisees" already alluded to, how is one to deal with such terms as "Son of Man," "Kingdom of God," "Synagogue," "evil spirits," and others equally difficult of rendering even to a trained adult mind? Furthermore, it is not always recognized how limited is a child's knowledge about ordinary mundane affairs. Taxes and tax gatherers can convey very little meaning to the juvenile mind, unless perhaps one were to use the analogy of the rent collector.

There is the further temptation to lapse into colloquialisms or the familiar "chatty" style frequently adopted by writers for the young. But Holy Writ is holy writ for whomsoever it may be translated, and anything in the nature of undignified diction would not only be abhorrent but also very possibly defeat the very ends for which

FOREWORD

the translation was made. The writer of this Gospel himself used a style and language of the utmost simplicity, for which reason no apology would seem to be needed for the present attempt to preserve the simple diction of the original.

Without altering the sequence of the text I have divided it into chapters of a convenient length either for devotional or class purposes; and the corresponding portion in the Authorized Version is indicated at the top of each page. Pronouns referring to Our Lord are printed in capitals except in those cases where they are used by persons not as yet believing in the Divine Lordship of Jesus.

I crave therefore the sympathy and indulgence of expert and inexpert readers alike, and trust that, in this instance at least, it may be held that the end I have had in view may serve to justify, to some extent, the very inadequate means.

E. V.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK

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CHAPTER ONE

THE MAN ON THE RIVER BANK

THE story of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, began in this way. It all happened as the prophets had foretold. One of them had said:

See! I am sending a herald in front of You,
To proclaim that You are coming, and to pre-
pare Your road.

Another had declared:

There will be a solitary voice on a desert
moor,
No one else declaring it. But he will tell it out.
"Make way for the Lord Who is coming.
Level the rough roads,
And straighten out the corners!"

It was on a desert moor like this that John appeared—the man who baptized, and preached that people must repent of their sins and be forgiven

in Baptism. He wore rough clothes made from the camels' hair, with a broad leather belt around his waist; and he fed on fat spring locusts, which he dried and mixed with the wild bees' honey.

Crowds of people went to the moor to hear him, men and women and children. From all the Jewish countryside they came flocking, along with large numbers of city people from Jerusalem. When they confessed their sins, John baptized them in the river Jordan, but he always told them, "There is Someone about to appear after me. He will be a far greater Person than I am, so great that I am not worthy even to be the slave that unties His shoes. I cannot give you more than this Baptism sign of forgiveness, but He will give you the real thing—the pure Breath of God's Spirit Itself within you."

One day, Jesus arrived from distant Nazareth, a small town of Galilee, and received Baptism from John in the river. But just as He was stepping out of the water, He looked up, and saw the skies splitting apart, and from the midst of them, fluttering down upon Him as gently as a dove, came the Spirit of God; and out from heaven itself came

a Voice which said, "You are my Son and greatly loved. I am well satisfied with You."

Jesus felt this Spirit of God come upon Him, and It urged Him to go away alone into the desert. He stayed there for forty days, with only wild beasts for company. He was sorely tempted by the devil to shirk what God wanted Him to do, but the angels of God helped Him through.

Then John was arrested, and at once Jesus returned to Galilee, and began to tell out the Gospel about God's Spirit ruling in people's hearts and lives. "The hour has come!" He told the people. "Everything has been prepared. God is now on His way to rule like a king amongst men. Listen and believe. Change your ways, for it is God's own Good News that I bring you."

On the shore of the Sea of Galilee He saw two fishermen, Simon and Andrew his brother, dragging their hand nets round the boat, and He called out to them, "Come along with Me and give Me your help! Come, I'll give you the souls of men to catch instead of fish!" Without any delay, they left their nets and went off with Him.

He went on a little further, and saw two other

fishermen, whose names were James and John. They also were brothers, and their father was called Zebedee. They were in their boat mending holes in their nets when Jesus called to them, and asked them too to come with Him. Whereupon they left their father in the boat with the paid hands, and went off with Him.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HEALTH GIVER

JESUS and the men He had called to Him came to a place named Capernaum, and on the very first Sabbath, He began to teach in the place of worship. People held their breath as they listened to Him, for He spoke as if He really knew, and not as if He were just guessing like the other teachers.

Now there was a mad fellow in the building, half-crazed, as if a demon were within him. With a wild, cracked voice he began to shout, "What are you doing here among us, you Jesus from Nazareth? Have you come to ruin us? I know all about you! You are the Chosen One of God!"

"Stop that talk!" said Jesus sharply. "Come out of him at once!"

At this, the fellow began to twist and roll about, and then he gave a great cry; the evil thing suddenly left him, and he was quiet.

Everyone gazed in amazement, and in awe-struck tones began to ask each other, "What on earth is this? What is this new teaching? . . . He can command even the demons! . . . Yes, and they obey Him!" The news spread rapidly, and soon the whole country was talking about Jesus.

When they left the building, Jesus made for the home of Simon and Andrew; James and John went with Him. There He learned that the mother of Simon's wife was ill with a high fever. So He went to where she was lying, and took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. At once the fever vanished, and she set about looking after the visitors.

By evening, when the sunset had ended the Day of Rest, people began to bring to Him all their friends who were ill in body or mind. Everyone in the place was gathering round the door. He cured many people of their illnesses, and drove evil spirits out of many others. The evil things knew Who He was, but this time He would not allow them to shout it out.

The next morning He was out of bed long before daylight, and wandered on to the moors; and

there, alone and quiet, He knelt to God. But Simon and His friends had followed closely behind Him, and when they came up to Him they said, "Everyone is looking for You."

"Then let us go somewhere else," He replied. "We'll go to the other little towns near at hand. When I left home I made up my mind to preach in all of them, and I must do it."

So He went about all over Galilee, preaching in the village halls and churches, and drove away the evil things that haunted folks' minds.

One day a leper came shambling up to Him, and fell down on his knees before Jesus.

"You could heal me completely if you cared," he pleaded. Jesus nearly wept with pity to see him, and at once stretched out His hand and actually touched the diseased man.

"I do care, very much," He murmured. "Let this touch make you well." And there and then the illness left him and he was clean. But Jesus spoke to the man sharply and hustled him away from the people. "Get out of this quickly," He said, "and don't go talking about it to anyone. Report to the Officers of Health at once, and pay the usual thank offering to God for your recovery."

The man however couldn't keep the news to himself, but chattered about it far and wide, with the result that Jesus could no longer appear openly in a town without being mobbed, and had to stay in quiet country places. Even there, people from all over the land sought Him out.

CHAPTER THREE

FIRST SIGNS OF ENEMIES

AFTER several days in the country, Jesus came back and went to the town of Capernaum. The news soon spread that He had returned and was in His lodging. Crowds began to gather about the house, and soon there was such a crush round the door that there was no room to move. So He went to them and preached God's message to them.

While He was speaking, four men appeared carrying a stretcher on which was lying a young fellow who was paralyzed and unable to move. When they found that they could not carry him to Jesus through the crowd, they lifted the beams from the flat roof above Jesus, and lowered the stretcher with the patient through the hole they had made.

When Jesus saw how much they believed in

Him He said to the sick man, "Your sins are forgiven, lad."

At this, some of the teachers of religion called *scribes*, who were sitting near, began to argue among themselves, "How can this man say things like that? That is unholy talk. No one but God can forgive sins."

Jesus knew quite well what was going on in their minds, so He turned and spoke to them.

"Why do you think such things? Would it not be far more difficult to say to this fellow, 'Get up, and lift your stretcher and walk away,' than to say what I said? Anyone could utter the words, 'Your sins are forgiven,' but this will show you that the Son of Man has the right to forgive sins while He is in the world"; and turning to the man He said, "Get up!" Whereupon the sick man rose to his feet.

"Now pick up your stretcher." The man bent down and picked it up. "Now go off home." And the man walked away before their very eyes! For a moment no one could speak for wonder; then they broke into gasps of amazement. "Glory to God! Never has the like of this been seen before!"

Jesus had gone back to the seashore, and was teaching the crowds of people who followed Him, when He noticed a man whom He knew, called Levi. His father's name was Alphaeus, and he was sitting at the pay box taking in the money when Jesus spoke to him.

"Come and join me, Levi," He said. Levi got up at once and went off with Him.

Later on, Levi invited Him to dinner at his house. Many other people were there, mostly friends and followers of Jesus. Some of them were well known as dishonest and doubtful characters. So when the scribes and the very proper people called *Pharisees* saw that He was in such company they were shocked. "Look at Him! Eating and drinking with men like that!" they sneered.

Jesus had overheard their words, so He looked at them and said, "Those who are in good health have no need of the doctor. It is those who are ill that need him. God did not send Me to deal with people who are always right, but with the other ones who have gone wrong."

One time, when John the Baptizer's supporters were keeping the fasting season along with the

Pharisees, He was asked, "Why don't your followers fast as these good people do?"

Jesus answered them, "You wouldn't expect guests at a wedding to be gloomy and to keep from all the good food as long as the bridegroom is with them, would you? While he is there everyone is expected to be merry and bright. But the time comes when he has to go away and leave them, and then the feasting has to stop. When that day comes my men will fast too, and no mistake. . . . Old ways and new ways don't go well together. You can't patch old clothes with unshrunk cloth, for the new piece would shrink, and the hole would be made worse than ever. An old cork is no use for bottling up new and sparkling wine, for the cork would be blown out and the wine would be spilt. The new life needs new ways."

The Pharisees objected another time. It was when He and His men were walking through a field of corn one Sabbath Day. Some of them began to pluck the ears of corn and to chew them.

"Look what they are doing!" said the Pharisees. "That is not allowed on the Sabbath."

Jesus said to them, "Don't you remember what David did when he was short of food and hungry,

and his men too? He went into the holy place and ate the sacred bread which priests only are allowed to eat, and gave it to his comrades and bade them eat it too. I tell you—rules such as keeping the Sabbath holy are not meant to burden people but to help them. People are more important than Sabbaths. That is why the Son of Man has power to command even the Sabbath rule to keep its place.”

Later, on that very same Sabbath, He went back to the place of worship. A man was there whose hand was shriveled like a withered leaf upon a twig. The Pharisees watched Jesus closely to see if He would dare to heal a man on the Sabbath Day, and then they could find fault with Him again for breaking the law.

Jesus acted quickly. He beckoned to the man. “Come up to the front here, nearer the platform.” Then He turned and faced the Pharisees. “Tell me, should a man do a kindness on the Sabbath, or do harm? Should he save a life if he can, or let it die?”

There was no answer. No one spoke. Then a stern and angry look came over Jesus’ face, for He was furious that men in their position could be so

obstinate, and He turned again to the man beside Him. "Put your hand straight out, fingers and all."

With an effort the man began to stretch it out. Further and further it straightened, until it was completely healed! But when the Pharisees saw this, they rose up and stalked out of the building and got in touch at once with the leaders of the king's supporters, and joined with them in a plot to kill Jesus.

CHAPTER FOUR

FRIENDS AND BROTHERS

JESUS slipped away from the crowds, and along with His disciples made for the shores of the sea. A great many people made after Him, however, coming from all over the country of Galilee. Some even came from as far as Jerusalem on the south to Tyre and Sidon in the north, and from the Eastern lands beyond Jordan, and all because they had heard of the things He was doing. So He arranged with His men to have a boat always ready, in case the crowds should become troublesome. This was needed because people who had any illness or plague crowded up close to Him to touch Him, and He was healing a great many folk. The evil spirits would fall down in front of Him whenever they saw Him and scream out, "You are the very Son of God Himself." Time and again He would check them

sternly, and order them not to make Him known like that.

Finding no peace at the shore He made for the hills, and bade the men whom He specially wanted to come with Him. So they came along with Him and there He chose His team—twelve in all. They were to keep beside Him, and He was to send them out to preach, and to cure diseases, and to drive away the evil spirits that haunted and terrified the people.

In this way were the *Twelve* appointed. Here are their names: Simon (but Jesus called him Peter), James and John, the sons of Zebedee (but Jesus nicknamed them "The Thunderers"). The others were Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (whose father was Alphaeus), Thaddeus, another Simon called "The Patriot," and Judas from the village of Kerioth, the man who turned traitor.

One day He returned home to visit His own folk, but the crowds gave Him no peace—even to take His food. His family were so concerned about Him that they went out to fetch Him. "We must take him in hand," they said, "for he is quite out

of his mind." The scribes said something worse. "He is in league with the devil," they murmured, "and uses the devil's power to drive out the evil spirits."

Jesus signed to them to come nearer, and asked them, "How can the devil fight against himself? If a country fights against itself it cannot last long. If the inmates of a house turn against each other the family will break up. And if the devil works against himself, one half of him divided against the other half, he cannot go on. He is done for. . . . If you want to rob the house of a strong man and take his belongings, you must first tie him up, and then you can ransack his house. That is how I take away the evil spirits. . . . Now let me tell you this very solemnly," He went on. "People will be forgiven all kinds of wickedness, even the vilest sins and the unholy talk, but to call the goodness of God the work of the devil, and to call God's Spirit an evil spirit, is a sin beyond all forgiving, for there is no end to it." (That was because they had said that He had an evil spirit Himself.)

By this time His mother and brothers had come out, and were standing at the edge of the crowd, trying to get a message to Him to come home.

Word was brought to Him through the crowd that clustered round Him. "Your mother and brothers are out there wanting you."

"My mother and brothers?" said Jesus. "Who is a real mother and a real brother to Me? There they are!" He exclaimed, looking round Him at the circle of eager listening faces. "Here are my real home folk, my true family. For whoever is ready to do what God wants, is My real brother, My real sister, and even My real mother."

CHAPTER FIVE

A FARMER AND HIS SEED

ONCE again He began to teach at the seashore. This time the crowd was so big that He had to use His boat. He pushed out a little way on to the water, and sitting in the boat, with the crowd on the sands close by, His voice came clearly. He spoke to them for a long time, and put His teaching into pictures and stories so that they could understand it easily.

"Listen to Me," He said. "You see that field over there—one day the farmer went out to sow that field with corn. As he scattered the seeds right and left some of them landed on that hard pathway through the field, and of course the birds got them and ate them up. Some of the seed fell on that bare ridge where you can see the rock appearing. Not much earth there, so up sprang the seeds at once because the roots couldn't go deep down.

But when the sun rose hot and strong, the little plants grew limp, for they had no deep roots and simply withered away. Some of the seed fell into that patch of thistles, but the thistles grew so tall and thick that the little seeds of corn were stifled, and nothing came of them. But some of the seed fell on good earth, and as the days passed it grew up strong and fruitful—some plants with thirty grains, some with sixty, and some with even a hundred. . . . Now if you have ears that can really listen, you will understand what I have been talking about.”

Later on, when they were alone, some people who had gathered round Him with the Twelve asked Him what He meant by this story, and He told them, “Everyone is not as you are, able to learn the secrets of how God comes to rule the hearts of people. Some of them can learn it only by means of stories like these. The trouble is that sometimes—

They see it all right, but will not look;
They hear it all right, but will not listen.—
Too unwilling to live better,
Too pleased with themselves to want forgiving.

“Do you really not understand that story?” He went on. “If you don’t understand an easy one like that, how will you understand all the others? . . . The seed that the farmer scatters is God’s Message. Some people hear it but are as hard as the foot-path, and it never sinks into their hearts. So the devil comes along and picks it up and carries it away. Other people are like the shallow earth on the rocky ridge. At first they are delighted with the Message, but they have no staying power. They cannot stick it out because they have no root to stick with, and when it costs them trouble or suffering, they simply fade away. There are still other people, like the thistle patch. When they hear the Message they listen and take it in; but they are so full of themselves and of their daily cares and the glamour of getting rich and cravings for all sorts of things, that the Good Message is crowded out and forgotten, and comes to nothing in the end. But the ‘good earth’ people are those who take the Message right inside their heart and mind, and it keeps on growing within them until it becomes thirty times as strong again, or sixty times, or even a hundred times.”

Here are some of the other teachings He gave them.

“Who would bring a lamp into a dark room, and cover it up with the bread barrel, or hide it under a bed? When a lamp is lit, you set it up on a lamp stand. The time will come when all that you are learning in secret will have to be made public, and what is made known to a few people only will have to be broadcast to everyone. . . . Once again I tell you, if you have ears that can listen you will understand.”

“Think over carefully these things you are hearing. The more you think about them and speak of them, the more you will learn yourselves. You will receive back as much again as you have given, and even more. For whoever uses what light he has, will find more light given to him; but those who will not think, will lose their light altogether.”

“God’s command of our hearts grows like the seed which the farmer sows in the ground. Having once sown it, he can go to bed at night and get up in the morning, and all the time the seed is quietly

sprouting and growing, and the farmer does not know how it happens. The earth simply brings it to fruit by itself—the little green blade first, then a tiny ear of corn, and at last the fully ripened grain. Then, and not till then, does the farmer get busy. The field is ripe and he can cut the crop, for his harvest is ready. God's kingdom grows in our hearts as that seed grows in the ground."

"How shall we liken the Rule of God in our hearts? What is it like? Think of the tiny seed of the mustard plant. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it is sown it grows and grows until it is bigger than any other plant in the garden—growing such leafy branches that even the big birds can roost safely under its shelter."

With pictures like these He made the people see His Message, giving them just as much as they could understand. He always spoke to the crowds in this way; but He explained His teaching much more fully to His men when they were alone.

CHAPTER SIX

TIMID PEOPLE MADE BRAVE

EVENING came at last on that long day, and He said to His men, "Let us sail across to the other side of the lake." So they sailed away from the crowded beach, taking Jesus just as He was, without coat or blanket. Some other little boats came with them. Before long, however, the wind grew strong, and soon a gale was blowing. Great swelling waves splashed over the little boat, and she began to ship water heavily. Yet through it all, Jesus slept soundly on the boat's cushion in the stern of the ship.

They shook Him awake, shouting through the noise of the storm, "Master! Master! Have you no thought for us? We're drowning! Don't You care?"

In a moment He was wide awake. Then He turned His face to the wind. "Be still, Wind! Lie down, Waves! Be at peace!" He commanded.

At that the wind dropped; the waves sank back. There was a great calm!

Then He turned to the men in the boat. "Why are you so terrified?" He asked. "Don't you believe that God is always taking care of you?" But they were staring with awe and wonder, saying to each other, "Whatever kind of man can He be, when even the very winds and waves do what He bids them?"

When the boat reached the shore they landed at a place called Gergesa. Jesus had scarcely stepped out of the boat when a madman came rushing wildly out of one of the caves and made toward¹ Him. These were the caves where the dead were buried, and this mad fellow lived in them, frenzied with fear of everyone and every thing. He would let no one near him. Often they had managed to fetter him hand and foot with heavy chains, but he was so strong that he broke the chains that held him. No one could quiet him. Night and day he roamed the caves and the cliffs, shouting and cutting himself with sharp stones.

He had watched Jesus from the distance, and now ran furiously and flung himself in front of

Him, screaming out, "What are you going to do with me, you Jesus? You are the Son of the All-High God. For God's sake don't torture me!" (For Jesus was already speaking to the evil spirit that was maddening him.)

"Leave him alone. Come out of him, you foul fiend!" He said.

Then He turned to the man and spoke to him. "What is your name?" He asked.

"There are so many of me," moaned the fellow, "that I am a whole host of people; so I call myself 'Legion.'" Then the evil spirits pleaded with Jesus not to banish them into strange country.

Now it happened that there was a large herd of swine grazing in a field above the cliffs. Suddenly the whole herd took fright, as if Legion's terrors had said to Jesus, "Send us into those swine so that we can haunt them," and as if Jesus had done this. For as the evil spirits left the man, panic seized the animals, and the whole herd rushed down the slopes and over the cliffs into the sea and were drowned. There were about two thousand animals.

It was now the swineherds' turn to be terrified. They took to their heels, and told the news to all

the neighboring villages and towns. In no time people were flocking out to see what had happened, but when they came to where Jesus was, all that they saw was the madman sitting properly dressed, calm and sensible. Then they too began to be scared.

When the people who had seen it told them the full story of the madman and the swine, they began to urge Jesus to go away. He therefore made for the boat again, but as He was stepping into it, the man begged Jesus to be allowed to go with Him.

"No," Jesus said to him. "You must go home—back to your own people, and tell them what God has done for you, and how He took pity on you." The man turned away and went off; and all over Ten-Town-Land he spread the story of what Jesus had done for him. What a sensation it caused!

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEVER DESPAIR

JESUS sailed back again in the boat to the shore He had left the evening before. When He landed, crowds gathered to meet Him. One man had just arrived. His name was Jairus and he was a headmaster. As soon as he saw Jesus he flung himself at His feet. "It's my little girl," he pleaded with tears in his eyes. "She's dying. But if You would only come and lay Your hands on her, she will get better and her life will be saved. O come! Do come!"

Jesus went off at once with the father, but the crowd pressed very closely round Him. There was a young woman in the crowd who had been an invalid for twelve years. She had tried several doctors and spent all her money on treatments, but was not a bit better. Indeed, she was becoming worse. People had told her about Jesus, so she crept through the crowd toward Him, murmur-

ing to herself, "If I can even touch His clothes I shall be better." At last she stretched out her hand behind Him and began to finger His cloak. . . . Immediately she was well. . . . But Jesus had felt healing power go out from Him, and turned round.

"Who touched my cloak just now?"

His companions looked surprised.

"People are crowding all round you. Why should you ask, 'Who touched me?'" But Jesus kept looking at the faces of the people behind Him to discover who it had been. Then the woman came forward, nervous and shy, for she knew what had happened to her, and, sinking to her knees in front of Him, told Him the whole story. "It's your faith in me that has made you better," said Jesus when He heard it. "May you go back home to happier days and may your illness trouble you no more!"

While He was talking to her a message came to Jairus, the headmaster, from his home. "Your little girl is dead," they told him. "Why trouble the Master to come any further?"

Jesus heard the message, but took no heed. "Don't give up hope," He said to Jairus. "Don't

despair. You must try hard to believe what God can do." He went on to the man's house and would let no one go with Him except Peter and James and John.

When they arrived at the house they found it all in confusion—people wailing and sobbing with loud cries. As He stepped inside He asked them, "Why all this crying and wailing? The little girl is not dead. She is only sleeping."

At this, they laughed at Him for a fool. Jesus, however, made them all clear out of the house, and taking only the father and the mother and His three friends, He opened the door of the room where the child was lying, and entered in. Then, taking the little hand in His, He spoke to her.

"*Talitha, cumi*," He said, which means, "Rise up, my little lass."

At that, the girl sat up and got out of her bed and began to walk about, for she was twelve years old. Her father and mother were almost crazy with wonder and joy—so much so that Jesus had to tell them to give her something to eat—but He forbade them strictly to go talking about it to anyone.

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Then He left them, and went away over the countryside with His companions and came back to His own home.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DANCING PRINCESS

ON the Sabbath after He came home He went to worship, and began to speak and to teach. As the large congregation listened they were puzzled, and they asked each other about Him.

“Where did he learn all that?”

“What sort of new teaching is this?”

“How does he do these marvelous things?”

“Isn’t he just the carpenter we used to know, and his mother Mary still lives here, and his brothers James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? His sisters, too, they all live here among us? Who does he think he is?”

They were indignant at Him, and showed Him no respect. But Jesus said to them, “The only place where a great man gets no respect is in his own native district, among his own people, and in

his own home." The result was that He could do no wonderful deeds there, except to cure a few sick folk by laying His hands upon them. He was surprised at the way they would not believe in Him, so He went from village to village round about, on a teaching tour, and began to send out the Twelve in pairs as well. He called them together first, and gave them the power to overcome the evil spirits. He told them to take nothing for their journey but a stick—no food, no bag, no money in their pockets. They could wear light shoes, but were to take no extra coat. "If you are staying in someone's house," He told them, "do not go changing your lodgings. Stay in the one house until you leave the place. If some village refuses to take you in, or the people refuse to listen to you, shake the dust off your feet as a sign of warning to them."

So the Twelve set out, and preached, bidding people to turn to God. They threw out many evil spirits, and treated a great many sick people, blessing them with oil and curing them.

Jesus' name was now well-known, and His fame came at last to the ears of King Herod himself. For people were saying, "It is John the Bap-

tizer come alive again. That's why He can do these marvelous things." Some denied this. "Not John," they said, "but Elijah." Other people simply said that He was one of the great men of old. But Herod, the more he heard of Jesus the surer he was. "It is John!" he gasped. "The man I beheaded has come back to life!"

For Herod had executed John the Baptizer. He had sent soldiers to arrest him, and had put him in prison and chained him, because of what John had said to Herod for taking as his queen a woman called Herodias. She was already married to Philip, Herod's brother, and John had said fearlessly that he was doing wrong. "You have no right to pretend that she is your wife," he told Herod.

Herodias, of course, was furious with John for saying this, and would have had him killed; but Herod had protected him because he knew that John was a straight man and a good man, and secretly Herod stood rather in awe of him. Although John's preaching stirred his conscience, yet he always enjoyed listening to him. But a day came when Herodias had her opportunity.

On Herod's birthday he gave a feast for his officers and commanders and all the important people of Galilee. Suddenly who should come tripping in among the guests but the little Princess, Herodias' own daughter, and began to dance before them. They all cheered her loudly, and the King was so pleased that he said to her, "Ask whatever you like and I will give it to you. Yes," he promised solemnly, "I'll give you whatever you ask up to half of my country."

At this the lass ran away to her mother and told her what the King had said.

"What shall I ask for, Mother?"

"Tell him you want the head of John, that Baptizer, brought to you on a dish."

The little girl ran straight back and right up to where the King was sitting and told him, "Please, I'd like the head of John the Baptizer on a plate; and please can I have it now?"

The King's heart sank when he heard that, but he could not refuse, because he had made his promise before all the guests. So he signed to a big guardsman and ordered him to bring John's head. The soldier strode out and went straight to the prison and executed John in his cell. Then he

brought back the head on a large plate and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. When John's friends heard the news, they took John's body and laid it in a grave.

CHAPTER NINE

STORMY SEAS

THE Twelve who had been sent out by Jesus in pairs met together again, and reported to Jesus how they had fared and what they had taught. So He said to them, "Come, you need a rest for a little. Let us go away by ourselves into some quiet and lonely place." For the life was all bustle with so many people coming and going, that they had no peace even to take their meals in comfort. So they slipped away quietly by themselves in the boat and made for a lonely bit of the shore.

Alas, their escape was noticed. Many people got to know of it, and hurried round the shore on foot, collecting others as they went, from all the places they passed through, and were there before Jesus and His men arrived. Instead of a quiet place He saw a great crowd waiting for Him as soon as He stepped out of the boat! But He was

sorry for them, they looked so pathetic—like sheep that had no shepherd! So he started at once and spoke to them about many things.

The time was passing, however, and the Twelve came up to Him and said, "It's getting late, and this is an out-of-the-way place. It's time you sent them away so that they can go to some of the nearby farms and villages and see if they can buy something to eat."

"You should give them something to eat," said Jesus.

"Do you mean that we are to go off and see what food we can buy and give it to them? It would cost pounds!"

"How much food do we have with us?" He asked. "Hurry and find out."

They counted it out. "Five loaves of bread and a couple of small trout," they reported.

Jesus then gave orders that all the people were to arrange themselves in small groups and to sit down on the green grass. So they settled themselves down in regular parties of about fifty each, and some of about a hundred. When all was ready Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish in His hands, and, looking up to heaven, asked God to

use them. Then He broke the bread into small pieces, and gave them to the Twelve to hand out to the crowd. He divided the two fish among them as well. Everyone had something to eat, and everyone was satisfied! Actually, when all the crumbs and broken pieces had been picked up they filled twelve baskets. The total number who ate the loaves was five thousand.

Without further delay He made the Twelve get on board their boat and sail off in the direction of a place called Bethsaida, while He stayed behind to see the crowd safely away. Bidding them all good-by, He set out alone up the hillside to pray.

Darkness was falling quickly when the boat with the Twelve was only halfway across the water, and He was all alone on the land. But as He looked seaward He could make them out, and saw that they were laboring against a strong headwind and worn out with hard rowing. So about three o'clock in the morning He set out after them, going on foot over the water. He meant only to go beside them, but when they saw Him walking on the water they thought it was a ghost,

and shrieked in terror, for they could all see Him, and were panic-stricken.

At that, He at once raised His voice and spoke to them. "It's all right! Take heart and don't be scared. It is I myself!" Then He climbed up into the boat beside them, and at that moment the wind began to abate. But they were awe-struck beyond words, with utter amazement. For their minds were so slow-witted, that even the miracle of the loaves had not opened their eyes to see Who He was.

They reached the other side at last, and beached the boat at a place called Gennesaret. As He stepped ashore the people knew Him at once, and rushed about, hurrying to bring their sick folk, even on their beds, wherever they heard He might be. Village or town or farmland, it mattered not—wherever there was an open space, there they would bring the sick and the diseased, poor invalids, pleading merely to be allowed to touch the fringe of His coat. And all who could do this found themselves completely cured.

CHAPTER TEN

DIRTY HANDS AND CLEAN HEARTS

BY this time the Pharisees were banded together against Him, working hand in hand with some of the teachers of religion from Jerusalem itself. They had noticed some of His men taking their food with "everyday" hands—that is, with hands that had not been washed. Now the Pharisees and all the Jews will not eat anything unless they have washed their hands even up to the elbows, thus keeping up an old custom. They will not even eat anything from the market place until it has been well scrubbed, and they have strict rules as well about washing cups and tumblers and jugs. So they challenged Him.

"What do your fellows mean by taking food with everyday hands?" they demanded. "Why do they disobey the rules our forefathers taught us?"

Jesus faced them. "Isaiah once said a fine thing

about people like you, you shams! This is how it is written in the Book:

The high-sounding words of this crowd seem
to honor God;
But their hearts have turned away from Him.
Their worship of Him is as worthless as an
empty bag,
For they teach their own ideas, and not God's.

That is what you are doing. You are holding on to what your forefathers have told you, but you have let slip what God commanded. That's a fine thing to do!" He flung at them. "Letting go the things God wants so that you can hold on to your old customs! For instance, God told us through Moses, 'Honor your father and mother. The man who is not kind to his parents is not fit to live.' But you allow a man to say to his parents, 'I could have helped you, but I have promised my money to the Church instead.' Because he has done that, you say that he has no need to do anything for his father and mother. What is that but flouting God's wishes in favor of your own customs? You do all sorts of things like that."

Then He signed to the people to come closer.

"Listen, all of you. Get this into your heads. Things outside you which you can touch and eat cannot make you unholy or impure. It is what is inside your own mind that dirties you, especially when you let it come out."

Afterward, when they went indoors away from the crowd, the Twelve asked Him, "What exactly did you mean when you said that?"

Jesus was surprised. "So even you are dull-witted! Can't you see that outside things, even unclean food, cannot make us unholy? It simply enters the body and leaves it, and never touches our thoughts at all. But think of the things that start from the inside—wicked thoughts, beastliness, stealing, murder, dirty behavior, greediness, cowardice, treachery, coarseness, bad talk, conceit, stupidity. All these vile things start from within you, and it is these that make people unclean."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A TRIP TO THE NORTH

AFTER this, Jesus went away from that district and took the road to the North till He came to the neighborhood of Tyre. He longed to be unnoticed and unknown; but His coming could not be kept secret. No sooner had He gone into His lodging than a woman, hearing where He was staying, came to Him and bowed herself at His feet. She had a little girl, she said, who took fearful fits, as if some demon had gone into her, and she pleaded with Jesus to drive the evil thing out of her.

Now the woman was a foreigner, and not of His own race. So He put it to her, "Do you not think that people should feed their children first before they feed the dog? Surely no one should take the children's dinner and throw it to the dogs? Should I not help my own people before I help you?"

Quick as a flash she retorted, "Yes, but even the dogs are allowed to eat what the children leave, and to pick up the crumbs."

"Well said!" replied Jesus. "Go straight home, and you will discover that your answer has cured your little girl."

Off she hurried home, and found the child still in bed, but the illness had gone.

He came back South again, leaving Tyre and its country behind Him, and traveled through Sidon back to the Galilee Sea by way of Ten-Towns. On the way some men brought to Him a fellow who was as deaf and dumb as a stone.

"If you would just lay your hands on him . . ." was all they asked.

Jesus took the man aside, away from everyone. First He placed His fingers in the man's ears, and wet his tongue with His own spit and rubbed it with His fingers. Then, looking up to God, He took a deep breath, as if forcing away everything that choked ear and mouth, and cried in a loud commanding voice: "Ears, open! Tongue, be loosed!"

At this the man's ears were no longer shut fast,

and his tongue was untied, and he began to speak quite clearly.

Jesus told the onlookers to say nothing about it, but the more He forbade them, the more they spread the story far and wide. People were thunderstruck with amazement, but what they said was this, "Whether He is making deaf to hear or dumb to speak, everything that He does is good."

Once again about this time a great crowd had gathered round Him and had brought nothing to eat, so Jesus called the Twelve round Him.

"I am sorry for all these people," He told them. "They have been following Me for three days, and now they haven't a bite left. If I send them home without anything to eat they'll collapse on the way. Some of them have a long way to go."

"It's impossible to find food for them in this place," said someone, and the rest nodded agreement.

"How much bread have we left in our store?" He asked.

"Only seven loaves," they replied.

"Very well," He said. "Bid the people sit down where they are on the heath."

When this was done, He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks to God. Then taking each loaf, He broke it in pieces, and filled the hands of each of the Twelve with broken bread. Then they went round and served it to the people. Someone managed to secure a few small fish, so He blessed these as well, and told His men to serve them out likewise.

There must have been four thousand people present that day, but every one of them had something to eat and was satisfied; and when the Twelve collected what was left over there was enough to fill seven of their provision bags.

So he dismissed the crowd at last, and sent them streaming off homeward. When the last of them was gone, He and the Twelve went down to where their boat was waiting and put off over the water.

CHAPTER TWELVE

WHO IS HE?

HE came in the boat to a place called Dalmanutha. Here the Pharisees sought Him out again and tried to raise an argument with Him to test Him if He were really from God.

"Show us a sign from heaven," they demanded.

He heaved a great groan as He heard them. "Why do you people today always ask for signs and proofs? Let me tell you, it is quite impossible to give any sign or proof to people with minds like yours." And turning His back on them He set sail again for the other shore.

They left in such a hurry that they quite forgot to take fresh supplies on the boat, until they discovered that there was only one loaf. Jesus spoke gravely. "The Pharisees and Herod are preparing a dangerous stew for me. You must beware of what they are baking and the hate they are put-

ting into it." But His men were only concerned that they had brought no bread.

Jesus could see that this was all they could think about. "Why do you go on talking and chattering about having no bread? Can't you understand? Surely you are not so dense. You have eyes—can't you see? You have ears—do you not hear? Where is your memory? How many baskets did you fill with leftovers when I divided five loaves among five thousand people?"

"Twelve, Master," they replied.

"And when I divided seven loaves among four thousand, how many were filled afterward?"

"Seven, Master," they replied again.

"Don't you see, then, that our real danger is not lack of food?"

At Bethesda a blind man was brought to Him. The people who guided him asked Jesus to touch him. Jesus took the blind man's arm and walked with him along the road until they were clear of the houses; then rubbing the man's eyes with spit, He laid His fingers on them.

"Can you see anything yet?" He asked him.

The man stared and looked around him. "I can

see the people, but they look like trees, except that they are walking."

Jesus touched his eyes again; and this time the man looked intently, straight in front of him. Everything was clear! His eyesight was back again! Jesus sent him straight home. "Don't even go into the village," He said.

Then He set out with the Twelve, and came to the outskirts of the new city of Caesarea. On the way He asked them, "Who are the people saying that I am?"

They told Him. "Some are saying that you are John the Baptizer. Others think that you are Elijah or one of the great prophets of old."

"But you yourselves, now—Who do you say that I am?"

Peter blurted out at once, "You are the Christ!" Then Jesus warned them not to tell it to anyone. For He told them that in a world like this the Son of Man would have to suffer cruelly. He would be shunned and cast out by people who should know better. He would even be done to death by them; but would return alive after three days. He spoke about this quite frankly, without hiding anything.

At last Peter took Him aside and began to check Him for saying things like that. But Jesus turned round and scolded Peter in front of them all.

“Away out of my sight, you tempter!” He exclaimed. “You think about things as ordinary men do, and not as God does!” He signed to the people standing round to gather closer along with the Twelve, and His voice rang out:

“If anyone wants to live in my way, he must cease thinking about himself. He must be willing to face and to endure heavy and hurting burdens and duties and to go the way that I go, following in my steps. For whoever tries always to protect himself will find that he has never really lived; but whoever is willing to lose everything, even his own life, for my sake and for my way, will find that he has really saved himself. Who would pay his own self as a forfeit, even to gain everything in the world? Who would not give everything he had if he could win his own soul back again? Some people may be ashamed to own that they believe in me and what I teach. Let them beware lest the Son of Man be ashamed of them, when He comes, attended by the angels and in all the

splendor of heaven. . . . Believe me, some of you who are standing here will still be alive to see the Rule of God spreading over the world.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE BOY AT THE FOOT OF THE HILL

SIX days later Jesus chose out Peter and James and John, and took them with Him to the top of a high hill where they were all alone. As they stood there with Him His appearance changed. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anything on earth could ever make them. They could see two persons with Him, Elijah and Moses, and they were talking to Jesus.

Peter blurted out, "What a good thing it is that we are here with you, Master! We can be putting up three shelters, one for yourself, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." The truth was that he didn't know what he was saying, for they were all scared out of their wits.

Then a mist crept over the hillside, and cast its shadow over them all, and out of the mist came a Voice, speaking. "This is my well-loved Son. Give

heed to what He says." Then suddenly the mist was gone! They looked round about but no one was there except themselves alone with Jesus.

As they left the hilltop to come down, He ordered them firmly not to speak a word to anyone of what they had seen—"At least, not until the Son of Man has come back from His death," He said. So they kept it secret, but kept on asking each other what He meant by "coming back from His death."

They came to Him later on and asked Him, "Why do the teachers say that Elijah must come back before the Son of Man appears? Why has Elijah not come?"

"Elijah did come," Jesus replied. "He it was who made everything ready for me. But do you remember how it is written about the Son of Man as well?—that He will have to go through great suffering and be despised. Elijah did come, but you know how they ill-treated him in their cruel way, as the Bible said they would."

When they reached the foot of the hill they found an argument going on between the scribes and the rest of the Twelve. A large crowd had gathered to listen, and when they saw Jesus com-

ing they were taken by surprise and ran to meet Him with shouts of welcome.

"What were you arguing about?" He asked.

A man out of the crowd supplied the answer. "Sir, it is my boy here. I was bringing him to you. Some evil spirit is making him dumb. When it attacks him, it seizes him and throws him to the ground; and his mouth becomes so tightly locked that his teeth grind together and his lips become covered with foam. His whole body becomes stiff and lifeless. I asked your men to drive out the evil spirit, but they could do nothing."

"What a people you are!" said Jesus. "Always more ready to believe in evil things than in the Loving God. How long shall I have to be with you before you believe in God? How long shall I need to be patient with you? Bring the boy here."

They brought the boy to Him, but as soon as the boy set eyes on Jesus the evil spirit rose in a frenzy within him and threw him to the ground, rolling over and over and foaming at the mouth. Jesus turned to the father. "How long has this been going on?"

"Ever since he was quite small," the father re-

plied. "It even throws him into the fire, or into deep water, as if trying to burn him or drown him. Oh, Sir! If you can do anything for him, take pity on his mother and myself, and help us!"

"If I can do anything for him—do you say? Anything can be done for one who believes in God."

"But I do believe in God, honestly I do," the father cried. "Do something to help me to believe still more."

Jesus glanced around him. The crowd was growing larger every minute, so without more delay He spoke sharply to the evil spirit:

"You deaf and dumb spirit, it is I who am commanding you. Come out of him at once, and stay out!"

The thing shrieked within the boy; it twisted him and threw him about in one last torture, and then—out it came! . . . The boy lay still and pale as a corpse. Everyone thought that he was dead. "He has died," they whispered. But Jesus, bending down, took his hand and lifted him to his feet, and the boy stood up.

When they came to their lodging later in the

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day, the Twelve asked Jesus privately why they had been so helpless in driving out the evil spirit. Jesus replied, "There's only one way of mastering things like that—and that is the way of prayer."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE REALLY IMPORTANT PEOPLE

THEY set out again and traveled through the lanes of Galilee. They moved as secretly as they could, for Jesus was now giving special teaching to the Twelve. He was telling them that the Son of Man would be betrayed to His enemies and that they would kill Him, but that He would come back to life again three days after He died. But they could not understand what He was talking about, and they were too scared at His words to ask Him further.

They came to the village of Capernaum, and when they had found shelter, He turned to them and asked, "What were you quarreling about on the road?"

No one answered, for the truth was that they had been arguing about which one of them was the most important member of the Twelve. So He gathered them round and sat down on a chair.

"If any of you want to be first," He told them, "you must put yourself last, and make yourself the servant of all the others." The little boy of the house was standing watching, and Jesus turned to him, took him by the hand, and set him in the middle of the circle and put His arms round him. Then He said, "Whoever treats even a little child like this in a Christian way, with kindness and with love, is doing the same to Me. And whoever honors Me in that way is honoring not Me, but God Who sent Me."

John said, "Master, talking about doing things in Your way, we found a man using Your name to drive away evil spirits; but we checked him for it, because he was not one of our followers."

"You should not have checked him," said Jesus. "No one who uses My name to do good can ever speak evil of Me. If he is not actually against us, then he is on our side. Even if he gives you nothing more than a drink of water in my name, because you are My followers, he will find himself rewarded. But anyone who hurts the trust of even the youngest and humblest of those who believe in Me, or makes them do what is wrong, would

be better if he had a heavy stone tied round his neck and were thrown into the sea! . . .

"If your right hand should make you do wrong," He went on, "cut the thing off! After all it is better to lack a hand and live like a man than to keep both hands and live like a beast. And if your foot should make you set out to do what is wrong, chop it off too! Better to be a cripple than to jump with both feet to your doom. And if you have your eye on wrong things, pull it out! Better to go one-eyed in God's way than to go with both eyes open into a hell that forever eats your heart out, and where the flames of regret never die down. . . .

"When food goes bad it has to be thrown into the fire. But salt keeps food fresh. Salt is wonderful stuff, but if it loses its saltiness it won't keep food in good condition. You must be thoroughly treated with the salt of unselfishness, and never quarrel about who is most important."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MARRIAGE, POVERTY, AND RICHES

THE day came when Jesus bade farewell to all that countryside. He crossed the border, and went over the river Jordan into the land of Judea. Even in this land, people gathered about Him in crowds, so He started teaching again in public as He used to do; and once again the Pharisees made for Him and tried to trap Him.

"Is it right," they asked Him, "for a husband to be no longer married to his wife?"

"What was the rule Moses gave you about that?" He asked them.

"Moses said that it was all right if the man gave his wife a signed certificate, and set her free."

"Moses said that simply because he knew that you were a hard-hearted lot. But when God made the world—

He made human beings men and women;
Therefore a man leaves his father and mother,
And he and his wife become one being.

That means that He has made them not two but one. Therefore no one must separate what God has joined into one."

Later on, in private, the Twelve asked Him again about this, and Jesus told them that if people leave their wife or their husband and marry again they are doing wrong.

Some of the fathers and mothers brought their boys and girls to Jesus just in order that He might touch them. Some of His men found fault with them, and Jesus was angry when He saw it.

"Let them come! Let them come to Me! Don't prevent them, for it is people like these youngsters who are the citizens of God's country. Let Me tell you this—no one can enter God's country unless he is prepared to enter in as if he were a little child." Then He took the children into His arms one by one, and laid His hands upon them, and gave each one of them a blessing.

He had not gone far along the road, when a man ran up to Him and knelt on the ground before Him.

“Good Teacher, tell me what I must do to live the best life.”

“Good? Why do you call Me good?” asked Jesus. “There is only One who is really good, and that is God. . . . You know what He has bid you do—no killing, no uncleanness, no stealing, no saying untrue things about people, no cheating, and be respectful to your father and mother.”

“Teacher, I have kept all these things since I was a boy.”

Jesus liked the look of the man and regarded him fondly.

“There’s just one thing needed then in your case,” He told the man. “Go back and sell everything you’ve got, and give the money to the poor, and you will be a rich man in heavenly things. Then come back and join My company.”

When the man heard that, he was greatly upset, for he owned a lot of valuable property, and he took his departure with a heavy heart. As they watched him go, Jesus turned to the Twelve and remarked, “You see what a struggle it is for those

who have a lot of money to find the way into God's country."

They were a little taken aback at this, but Jesus repeated it. "Men, I tell you it is no easy thing to take the road into the land of God. It is easier for a camel to make itself small enough to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to make himself humble enough to squeeze into the country of God."

At this they were all dismayed, and began to murmur among themselves, "Who can possibly get safely in?"

Jesus looked straight into their eyes and said, "The thing would be impossible for a man by himself; but if you have God with you, everything is possible."

Peter started to speak. "Well, think of us. Look how we have given up everything in order to come with You."

Jesus turned to him. "I give you My solemn word that anyone who has given up anything in order to proclaim God's message, whether it be his home or his brothers and sisters, or his mother and father, or his children, or his fields and his farm, will find a hundred times more in return

—yes, even now in this world. He will find himself in a far larger family, a far greater home, and owning far wider fields—even though he has to endure bad treatment—and in the world that is coming he will have the fullest life of all. Many people who think that they are most important will find themselves left behind; and many who think that they are not worth much, will find themselves at the top of the list.”

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE LAST JOURNEY

THE day came when Jesus and His company set out on the road that led to Jerusalem. As they watched Jesus, striding silently along in front of them, a sudden strange fear began to grip their hearts, and they felt very uneasy as they followed on behind Him. So once again He gathered the Twelve around Him and told them what was going to happen to Him.

"We are making for Jerusalem," He said. "That is where the Son of Man will be handed over as a prisoner into the power of the head priests and the scribes. They will sentence Him to death, and give Him over to the Romans who rule our country. These foreign soldiers will make sport of Him, and spit in His face, and lash Him with their whips, and after that they will execute Him. But within three days He will live again."

In spite of these words, the two brothers, James

and John, whose father was Zebedee the fisherman, went to Him and asked Him, "If we ask a favor of You, Master, will You give it to us?"

"What do you want me to do?" He replied.

"We want You to arrange for the two of us to sit beside You in your day of triumph—one of us on Your right hand and the other on the left."

Jesus shook His head. "You haven't the least idea what you are asking for," He said. "Can you take the same bitter medicine that I must drink, and plunge through the same dark waters that I will be baptized with?"

"Yes, Master. Surely we can," they answered.

"You can indeed be sure of sharing that much with Me! For you will certainly have bitter things to swallow, and dark waters to pass through. But to sit on My right hand and on My left in that great hour is not for Me to arrange. It will be given to those for whom it is marked out."

The other ten were very indignant with James and John when they heard of this, but Jesus called them round Him, and spoke to them.

"You know how the kings of the earth and other would-be rulers of the people swagger over

them like lords of creation, and the great ones are tyrants and bullies. It must never be like that among you. The one who is your servant is to be counted your greatest man, and whoever wants to be the chief is to be the slave of all the others. For even the Son of Man has not come to be served and waited upon, but to wait on others and serve them, and even to pay for their faults, although it will cost Him His life."

And so they came to Jericho.

As they went on out of Jericho a large crowd went with them. Now, a blind beggar was sitting at the side of the road, who was called Bartimaeus. Hearing the noise of the crowd he was told that it was Jesus, the Man from Nazareth, who was passing; and at this he at once began to shout at the pitch of his voice, "Jesus! Jesus! Royal Jesus! Take pity on me!"

Some people shouted to him to hold his tongue, but that made him call out all the louder, "Jesus! Have pity on me!"

Jesus stopped. "Tell him to come here," He said. People at once began fussing round the beggar. "Up you get!" they said in excitement. "Cheer

up! He's asking you to come to Him." The beggar threw off his tattered cloak and jumped to his feet, and groped his way to where Jesus was.

Jesus turned to him. "What do you want Me to do?"

"O Master, give me back my eyes that I may see again!"

"All right. Go back home," replied Jesus. "Your belief in Me has been the saving of you." At that, back came the seeing to his eyes, and he joined the crowd, walking along the road after Jesus.

They were now coming near Jerusalem. At the Bethany crossroads, under the slopes of the Hill of the Olive Trees, Jesus sent two of the Twelve on ahead.

"Make your way to that village over there," He told them. "Just as you enter the village you will see a young colt tethered. It is untamed and unbroken to the saddle; but, nevertheless, loosen the halter and lead it here. And if anyone asks you why you are doing this, say these words, '*The Master needs it.*' Say also that He will send it back very soon."

The two men set off, and when they reached the village they found a young horse tied to the posts of a door in the open street, so they set about undoing the rope. Up came some men who had been lounging near.

“Hi! What are you doing? What business have you to loosen that rope?”

They answered in the exact words that Jesus had given them, and the men made no more ado. So they led the creature along the road to where Jesus was waiting. The two men then folded their cloaks and laid them for a saddle, and Jesus mounted on to the young beast's back. Then the whole crowd became wildly excited. Some of them spread their cloaks on the ground like a carpet. Others of them cut leaves and rushes from the fields, and scattered them on the road before Him. And one and all, marching in front and behind Him like a bodyguard, cheered and shouted, “Hosanna! Welcome to our heaven-sent King! Welcome to the throne of our forefathers—Good King David's heir! Our own King is coming back again! Hosanna in the highest!”

So they shouted; and thus He entered Jerusalem. He made straight for the temple; but as the

hour was growing late, He did no more than look round at all that was going on, and then went out of the city with the Twelve to the village of Bethany for the night.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE STRUGGLE IN THE TEMPLE

THE following morning they set out from Bethany to return to Jerusalem, and on the way Jesus began to feel hungry. He spied a fig tree in the distance covered with great green leaves. So He made for it hoping to find some fruit. But when He came to it He found nothing but leaves. It really was not the time for figs, but, even so, Jesus spoke to the tree. "Tree, tree! All for show! Let no one eat figs from you any more for ever." The Twelve overheard Him as He spoke.

At Jerusalem Jesus again made for the Temple, and right away began to clear out what He had seen going on the evening before. He drove out the people who had turned it into a market, buyers and sellers alike. He tipped over the tables where men were giving change for money. He knocked over the stalls where pigeons were being sold;

and He refused to allow anyone to wander about the sacred building carrying baskets and water-jars and bags of tools as if it were a street. Over the din His voice rang out. "In the Book is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples'? But what have you turned it into? You have made it a robbers' den!"

When word of what had happened came to the head priests and the scribes, they began to discuss how they could get rid of Him. Truth to tell, they were really afraid of Him, for all the people were thrilled by His teaching. All the same, Jesus was careful to leave the city when evening fell.

Next morning, as they were passing along the road, they noticed the fig tree. It was withered to the roots! Peter remembered hearing what Jesus had said.

"Look, Master! There's the fig tree You cursed, and now it's all withered!"

"Always believe in what God can do," He said in reply to their puzzled looks. "If you were to say to this hill, 'Hill, move from here and be tumbled into the sea,' and really believed without any shadow of a doubt that what you said

would happen, it would come true for you. That's why I tell you it is so important when you are praying for anything to believe that you already have it, and it will be yours. But remember, when you are praying, you must have no grudge against anyone, but forgive them freely, for only then can your Father in heaven forgive what you have done against Him."

So once again they arrived back at Jerusalem. As He was walking in the Temple, the head priests, and the scribes, and other officials came up to Him and challenged Him.

"By what right did you behave as you did yesterday? Who gave you orders to act like that?"

His reply was ready. "I can tell you whose orders I am obeying if you will give me a straight answer to a straight question. The question is this—Was John the Baptizer sent from God or was he not? Tell me what you think."

Then they began arguing among themselves, muttering to each other, "If we say he came from God, he will ask us why then didn't we believe him. But are we to say that he was not heaven-sent?" . . . (for everyone was sure that John was a heaven-sent teacher, and they didn't dare go

against the people). So they turned to Jesus and said, "It is impossible for us to tell."

"Very well," He replied. "Neither do I tell you on whose orders I do these things." Then He proceeded to tell them a story.

"There was once a fruit farmer who planted a large orchard. He fenced it round with a strong railing; he dug good drains and built fine sheds and storehouses. Then he rented it to tenants to work it, and went himself to live elsewhere. When rent day arrived he sent one of his men to collect the rent from the profits of the farm. But the tenants handled him roughly, and sent him away with nothing. So the owner sent another of his men, but they treated him even worse than the first, taking their fists to him and beating him in the face, and shouting abuse at him. He sent a third man to them, and this time they beat the fellow to death. He kept on sending messengers, however, but all of them were either killed or cruelly treated. At last, he had but one person left to send—his own son, whom he loved devotedly. 'At any rate, they will show some respect to my son,' he said.

"But the tenants plotted together when they

saw the son, and they said, 'Here is the future owner. If we get rid of him the whole fruit farm will be ours.' So they seized him and murdered him, and threw his body over the railing.

"Now what will the owner do next? He will come himself, and clear them out, and make an end of them, and rent the farm to other people. Have you not read this writing in the Book?—

"'The stone which the masons refused to use is the very stone which has been chosen to cap the corner. It was the Lord who did this, and it is an amazing thing for us to see.'"

When He had finished speaking they would have arrested Him there and then, for they knew that He was thinking of them when He spoke about the wicked tenants; but they did not dare to touch Him, because the crowd round about was on Jesus' side. So they turned their backs on Him and walked away.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE ENEMY LAYS TRAPS

THE priests laid plans to trap Him into saying something for which He could be punished. They first sent men to Him, some of whom were against the Roman rule and some who were in favor of it. Up they came to Him and said smoothly, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere and that you will say what you think is true without fear of anyone. You don't pay any heed to rank or title or social position. You teach honestly the way God wants men to live. Well, then, tell us—is it right for us to pay taxes to this Roman Caesar, or is it not? Shall we pay up, or shall we refuse?"

But He knew the part they were playing, and said to them, "Why are you trying to trap me? Let me see a coin."

Someone produced a coin and He showed it

to them. "Whose head is this? And whose name is written here?" He asked.

"Caesar's," they replied.

"Then give Caesar what belongs to Caesar," said Jesus; "but be sure also to give to God what belongs to God."

They could not help admiring this reply.

The next attempt to trap Him came from the Sadducees—people who say that there is no rising from the dead—and their question was this.

"Teacher, Moses made a law that when a married man died, his brother should marry the widow and bring up children for the dead man. Now there was a man who had six brothers. He died, and left no children. Then his brothers, one after the other, married the widow, but each of them died without any children. At last the woman herself died. Whose wife will she be in the next life, for she was the wife of each of the seven here?"

"You have got the thing all wrong," said Jesus in His reply, "partly because you don't know the Bible, and partly because you don't know what God can do. In the next life men and women do

not marry, but are like the angels. If you do not believe that there is a next life, have you not read in the writings of Moses how God said to him out of the burning bush, 'I am Abraham's God, and Isaac's God, and Jacob's God.' But God isn't a God of what is dead, but only of people who are still alive. . . . You are really very far wrong."

Next came one of the scribes who had been listening to all these arguments, and admired the way that Jesus had answered the questions, and asked Him, "Which do you think is the most important of God's commands?"

"The most important of God's commands is this one," said Jesus. *"Listen, you Jews. The Lord our God is one single God. You must be loyal to Him with the whole of your heart, the whole of your will, the whole of your mind, and the whole of your strength."*

"And the next most important one is this, *You must love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.* There are no commands more important than these."

"A great answer, Sir!" exclaimed the scribe. "There is nothing truer than what you said, that

God is one single God, and that He alone is God: and if we can be true to Him with every ounce of our love and of our thought and of our strength, and if we can think for others as much as we think about ourselves, that is far more important than any religious ceremony."

When Jesus heard him speak so sensibly, He said, "You are not far away from living where God rules in your heart."

After that there were no more attempts to trap Him with questions.

Now, when He had given these answers, Jesus began to teach in the Temple. "Why do the scribes teach that Christ must be of David's family? David himself said—and it was the Voice of God speaking in him—*God said to my Lord, sit on my right hand until I have laid all your enemies at your feet.* How can Christ be his own son if he calls Him 'My Lord'?"

The people listened with delight to teaching like this, but Jesus went on. "Do not trust these professors. All they care about is to parade in their gowns and robes, and to have people bowing and scraping to them, and giving them the best seats

in Church and foremost places at the festivals. And all they do in return is to eat up the very houses of poor widows with their big bills, and mumble long prayers that they do not mean! What a day of reckoning is waiting for them!"

As He sat down He found Himself opposite the collection boxes. He could watch the people giving their money: rich people tossing their silver and gold into the plate; then one poor widow came up and shyly slipped in—a couple of pennies! Jesus signed to the Twelve to gather round. "Let me tell you something. It is a solemn fact that that poor widow yonder has put more into the plate than any of the others. For they have so much that they do not miss what they have given; but she has so little that she has put in all her living."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

A GRIM OUTLOOK

WHEN they were leaving the Temple one of the Twelve exclaimed, "Master, what a huge building this is and how big these stones are!"

Jesus replied, "Do you see all these great buildings? The day is coming when not one of these stones will be left on another. They will all be pulled down."

Later on, while they were sitting on the Hill of Olive Trees, looking across the valley to the Temple, Peter and James and John, seeing they were alone, asked Him, "Tell us, when is it going to happen? How shall we know that it is about to take place?"

Then He began to tell them strange things. "Be on the lookout and don't be taken in," He began. "All sorts of people will come and use My Name for this and that. They will say, 'Here I am—

Christ Himself'—and many people will be fooled. And if you should hear talk of wars and threats of wars, don't be alarmed. That sort of thing is bound to happen, but it does not mean the end of things. Nation will fight with nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes, here, there and everywhere, with famine and starvation. These are just the pains of a new world about to be born.

"You will have to see to yourselves. You will be brought before police courts; you will be flogged in public; you will have to stand trial before judges and rulers—and all because of Me. But it will be your chance to speak for Me. Indeed, My message must be preached in all the lands of the earth before the end comes.

"When you are taken to face your trial, don't go over in your mind what you will say in defense. Speak the words that God will put into your mind at the time. For it will not be you that speak, but God's Holy Spirit within you.

"Families will be divided. Brothers will betray their brothers to death; fathers will betray their own sons, and children inform against their parents, rebelling against them and having them

killed. You will be hated by everyone because you bear My name of Christian. But whoever can hold out to the end will come through all right.

“When you see ‘The Unholy Horror’—too horrible to mention—the heathenish man standing where only God should stand [those who read this will know what that refers to], then all the Christians in this land must flee for dear life to the hills. There will be no time to lose. If you are upstairs don’t wait to collect your things; if you are at the door, don’t go inside; and if you are working in the garden don’t go back to get your coat. Oh! the sorrow for mothers with babies then! And the agony for mothers-to-be! Hope and pray that it does not happen in the winter; for it will be a time of such distress as the world has not seen since God made it, and will not see again. If God did not cut that time as short as possible no one would be left alive. But He has cut it short for the sake of the select people whom He has chosen.

“That is the time not to believe those who say to you, ‘See, here is the Christ!’ or ‘See, there He is!’ For false Christs will appear and sham teachers set themselves up, and they will work miracles and

marvels, so that even the best people will be led astray, if that were possible. But you must watch out and be on your guard. I have given you good warning of everything.

"Then at last, when this terrible time is at an end, the sun will grow dark and the moon lose her light; stars will fall from their places, and the heavenly powers will be shaken. Then mankind will see the Son of Man, throned on the clouds and coming with great power and splendor. And He will send out messengers to gather all His people from every corner of the earth, from the world's lowest edge to the very peak of heaven.

"Learn from this fig tree here. You know that summer is near because its twigs are soft and green, and all its young leaves are coming out. Very well, when all these things happen that I have told you, He is very near. He is even knocking at the door.

"All this will happen in the lifetime of many who are alive now. Though heaven and earth should disappear My words will stand forever. No one can really tell when these things will happen. Not even the angels in heaven. Not even

God's Son Himself. Only God knows when that time will be.

"So once again I say it. Keep your eyes open! Be on the alert! For you never know when it may be. It is like a man going from home. He leaves his house in the care of his servants, telling each of them what to do, but he orders the doorkeeper to watch carefully, and be ready for his return at any time. That is the order I am giving you. Be ready! Keep a good lookout! For you never know when the head of the house will return. It may be in the evening; it may not be till midnight. It might be at the dawn when the birds are waking, or not until the sun is up. Keep watch, lest He arrive suddenly and find you—sleeping! And what I say to you I say to everyone—Keep good watch and guard!"

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE LAST SUPPER

IT was now only two days before Passover—the Feast at which unraised bread was eaten. The priests and the scribes were looking for some way to have Jesus arrested and put to death before that time. “It mustn’t be done during the Feast,” they said, “or the people might make trouble and cause a riot.”

He was in Bethany village at the time, staying at the house of a man called Simon, known as “The Leper.” While he was having a meal and resting, a woman came up to Him carrying a valuable jar made of alabaster, which was full of a very expensive perfume. What did she do but smash the jar at the neck and pour the whole of the scent over Jesus! Immediately there were murmurs of disapproval and anger from some of those present. “What’s the good of wasting the stuff in such a way? It could have been sold for fifteen or

twenty pounds, and the money given to the poor." And they scowled at her in anger.

Jesus turned to them. "Leave her alone! Why do you vex her like that? That was a beautiful thing for her to do to Me. You can always find poor people to be kind to if you wish—but I—I shall not always be here with you. What she could do, she has done. The perfume is the scent of My funeral flowers. . . . And let me tell you this—all the world over, wherever the message of God is told, people will speak of the fine thing she has done, and she will be remembered forever."

But Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, got up and left the room and went to the priests to offer to betray Jesus to them. When they heard what he had to say they were delighted and promised him money. So he began to look about for some way of doing it.

The Feast Day arrived—the first of the days of special bread and the day when the lamb of sacrifice was killed. The Twelve therefore asked Him, "Where would You like to eat the Passover? Tell us and we shall make it ready." He sent two of them on ahead. "You two will go into the city," He said, "and you will see a man carrying a large

water jar. Follow him without a word until he enters a house. Go in after him, and say to the owner of the house, "The Master bids you show us the room where He is to eat the Passover with His men." He will then take you upstairs and show you a large room, with a table and chairs set out for a meal. Prepare the Feast for us there."

The two men set off for the city, and everything happened as Jesus had described. So they prepared the Passover Supper, and at dusk Jesus arrived with the others.

While they were seated at the table and eating, Jesus said to them, "One of you is going to betray Me. One of you who is eating here with Me now!" They were all dismayed at what He said. Then one by one they all began to ask Him anxiously, "Surely You can't mean me! Could it be me?" But He merely said, "It is one of the Twelve, feeding from the same dish as I. . . . The Son of Man has to set out on His long lone road as the Bible tells, but God pity the man who betrays Him! It would be a good thing for that man if he had never been born!"

While they were still eating, He took a loaf of bread and said a blessing over it. Then He broke

it in pieces and gave each man a portion and said, "Take your share; as My body, so is this." After that He took a cup, and holding it in His hand, thanked God for His goodness. Then He passed it round and each man drank from it. "Let this be the sign of My very life's blood," He said, "which I am pouring out for countless people. It is the token of God's solemn promise to mankind. It is the last cup of wine I shall drink, until the day when I drink the fresh and newer wine of the Homeland of God." Immediately afterward they sang the closing hymn and left the house, making for the Hill of Olive Trees.

As they walked Jesus spoke to them again. "You will all of you fail to stand up to this, just as the Bible says, 'The shepherd will be struck down and all the sheep will scatter.' . . . But after I come back from death, I shall go ahead into Galilee before you."

Peter turned to Him. "Though everyone else should fail You, most certainly I would not!"

Jesus looked at him. "Peter, one thing I can tell you for certain. Before this day ends, this very night before the cock has twice crowed tomorrow's dawn, you will three times have said that

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you had nothing to do with Me." But this made Peter repeat more strongly than ever, "Though it should mean dying by Your side I shall never, never desert You!" All the others said the same.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

BETRAYED!

WHEN they reached a place on the hillside which was called Gethsemane, Jesus said to His men, "Sit here and wait while I go and pray." However, He took Peter and James and John along with Him. Then He began to shudder and to tremble. "My heart is breaking to the very point of death!" He told them. "You three wait here and keep guard." Then, going forward a few paces, He flung Himself to the ground and prayed that, if possible, the dreadful hour might pass Him by.

"Father, O my Father, everything is possible for You. O take away this cup! Let it pass Me by! . . . And yet—let it not be what I want of You, but what You want of Me."

When He came back to them He found the three men lying down, fast asleep! He spoke to Peter. "Simon, man! Are you sleeping? Could you

not keep guard for one short hour? You must all keep awake and pray hard if you are not to be tempted to desert Me. You mean well, but human nature is weak."

Once more He went forward and prayed, saying the same words over again. Then for the second time He came back and found them dozing as before. Their eyes were so heavy that they would not keep open, and they were too sleepy to know what to say.

A third time He returned to them, but this time He spoke quickly. "Sleep your fill and rest well! . . . No! Enough of that! The hour has come! Look! See, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of wicked men. . . . Get up! Let us get on with it! . . . Ah! Here comes My traitor!"

The words were still on His lips when Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, broke in upon the scene, followed by a gang of toughs carrying swords and clubs. These men had been hired by the priests and the rest of their crowd, and Judas had given them a secret sign. "The man that I kiss," he had told them, "that is the man we want. Seize Him securely, and take Him away under a strong guard."

Judas did not delay. He walked straight to where Jesus stood, and said, "Master!" and gave Him a kiss. Then the crowd rushed on Jesus and grabbed Him with their hands and held Him fast. At this, one of those who were standing round Jesus sprang forward with his knife bared, and struck at one of the gang (he was the Chief Priest's servant) and cut off the man's ear.

Jesus stood facing them all. "You would think I was a dangerous criminal, coming for Me with knives and clubs. I was in your midst day after day when I was teaching in the Temple, yet you never laid hold on Me then! But this is just what the Bible foretold."

By now His followers were deserting Him and slipping away. One by one they hurried to make their escape. There was a young boy who had followed behind Jesus as they led Him away. He had hastily flung a linen covering round his body without waiting to dress. Suddenly the mob grabbed him; but he wriggled out of their clutches, leaving the cloth in their hands, and he ran away quite naked.

Then they hustled Jesus into the presence of the Chief Priest. And all the priests and all the coun-

cilors, and all the religious leaders were gathered there. A long way behind crept Peter, following at a safe distance. He came as far as the outer court of the Chief Priest's palace, and he sat there among the servants and warmed himself at the fire.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE TRIAL

NOW the priests and all the Council were trying hard to find some reason for condemning Jesus to death, but their efforts were in vain. Many witnesses told false stories against Him, but their stories did not agree. Some stood up and told bare-faced lies. They said, "We heard him ourselves saying, 'I shall destroy this man-made temple, and build another one without any human help in three days.'" But even in this their words did not agree. Then at last the Chief Priest himself rose to his feet. Standing at his place in the center, he asked Jesus, "Have you nothing to say to all these things they speak against you?"

Jesus however kept silent, and made no reply. Then the Chief Priest questioned Him again.

"Tell me, are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

His reply was clear. "I am. The time is coming when you will see the Son of Man throned on the right hand of the Heavenly Power, attended by the very clouds on high."

At this the Chief Priest cried out, tearing his clothes in horror. "What need have we of any witnesses now? You have heard, yourselves, His unholy words! What is your verdict?"

They all said, "He is guilty; and the penalty is death." Then some of them began to spit on Him; others blindfolded Him and hit Him in the face, and then bade Him tell who did it. Even the warders struck Him with their fists when they took Him away.

All this time Peter was still downstairs in the courtyard. One of the serving maids passed by, and caught sight of Peter keeping himself warm. She looked closely at him and then taunted him. "Ho, ho! So you were also one of this man's crowd—this Jesus of Nazareth!"

He denied it fiercely. "What nonsense! I know nothing about Him. I don't even understand what you mean." And he got up and walked out to the doorway. But the girl passed by again, and seeing him there called out to the men standing round,

"This fellow is one of them." Once more he flatly denied it.

After a few minutes, however, the men themselves said to him, "You can't deny that you are one of that lot; anyone can tell that you come from Galilee."

Then he broke out on them in oaths, calling down curses on them. "I swear on my word of honor, I know nothing whatever about this Man you speak of." The dawn was breaking and the cocks were beginning to crow. Once—twice! In a flash the word of Jesus came back to Peter, "Before the second crowing of the cock you will disown Me three times." Then Peter collapsed completely, and sobbed aloud.

It was daybreak before the priests had made their plans and the whole Council with the teachers and the leading men agreed to them. They tied His hands securely, and sent Him over to Pilate, the Roman Governor, to be dealt with.

Pilate now began to question Him.

"Are you the King of the Jews?" he asked.

"It is you who have said it," replied Jesus.

At this, the priests brought charge after charge against Him, blaming Him and accusing Him of many things. Pilate turned to Jesus once more and said, "Why don't you say something in your own defense? Listen—what dreadful things they are saying about you." Jesus, however, said never a word; which made Pilate think hard.

Now during the Festival season, Pilate usually granted a free pardon to one prisoner chosen by the people. One man in the prison at this time was called Barabbas. He had been arrested along with a number of hooligans, for taking part in a riot where someone had been killed. When the people began to gather to ask for the usual pardon for their man, Pilate suggested to them, "Would you like me to set free the King of the Jews for you?" (for he could see that the priests had passed Jesus to him for sentence out of sheer ill-will). But the priests mixed with the crowd and egged them on to say that they would rather have Barabbas set free instead. When Pilate heard their choice, he asked them again, "What then do you want me to do with the man whom you call the King of the Jews?"

Then they shouted back, "Crucify Him!"

"Surely not!" Pilate replied. "What harm has He done?"

But they became excited, and shouted back louder than ever, "Crucify Him!" So in the end Pilate gave in to them. All he wanted was to please the people. Barabbas was set free; but Jesus was held fast, flogged with whips, and handed over to soldiers to be executed on a cross.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE DEATH OF JESUS

A MILITARY guard led Jesus away to the inner part of the building where the soldiers' quarters were, and sent word for the whole regiment to come along. Then they dressed Him up in purple robes, like a king, and twisted branches of thorn into a crown and set it on His head. They saluted Him, and began to hail Him, "Long live the King of the Jews!" They gave Him a cane for a scepter; and when He refused to hold it, they hit Him with it on the head. They spat upon Him instead of giving a kiss of homage, and knelt before Him in mock loyalty. At last, when they had tired of making fun of Him, they took away the purple robes and dressed Him again in His own clothes. This done, they marched Him off to be tortured to death upon a cross.

As they went along they laid hold of a foreigner

from Cyrene, a man called Simon, who was coming into town from the country, and forced him to carry the heavy cross. (He was the father of Alexander and Rufus.)

So they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha, which in our language means "Skull Corner." They offered Him drugs to dull the pain, but He refused them. Then they fastened Him to the cross. They shared out His clothes among themselves, tossing up to decide what each man should get. It was then about nine o'clock in the morning. A notice was put up above His head stating His crime—

"THE KING OF THE JEWS"

Two robbers were executed at the same time, each on a cross on either side of Him, and people passing along the road sneered at Him. "Aha! You're the clever fellow who would destroy the Temple and build it again in three days! Save your own skin if you can, and come down from the cross!" So they shouted at Him, nodding in a knowing way to each other. Even the priests jeered at Him among themselves along with other

religious leaders. "He saved other people from dying, but he can't save himself now! . . . This Christ! This King of the Jews! Let him come down now from that cross so that we can see it! Then we shall believe him." Even the two wretches dying on their crosses beside Him hurled their taunts in His teeth and blamed Him.

At midday, a dense cloud spread darkness over the whole country, and did not lift until three in the afternoon. It was then that Jesus cried out in a strong voice the words of the Psalm—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, "O God! My own God! why have You deserted Me?"

Some people who were standing nearby heard Him and said, "Listen, He's calling for Elijah!" One of them ran and dipped a sponge in bitter wine, and put it on the end of a rod and held it to His lips. "Hold on!" cried the fellow. "Let us keep him going a little longer, and see if Elijah comes to help him down."

But just at that moment, Jesus gave one loud cry, and then—He died.

In the Temple the great curtain was found split completely in two from the top to the foot. The

officer in charge of the soldiers stood facing Jesus; when he saw the way that Jesus died, he said, "This Man was certainly the Son of God!"

A small group of women had been watching from a distance. Among them was Mary, the woman from Magdala, and Mary the mother of "young James" and of Joses. Salome was also there. These women had looked after Him when He was in Galilee, going with Him from place to place. There were several others besides, who had come with Him to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE FIRST EASTER

EVENING was falling by this time, and as the next day would be the Jews' Sabbath all preparation had to be finished before sundown. Now there was a man called Joseph who lived at Arimathea. He was an important member of the Council and a man of sincere faith in God. Greatly daring, he hurried to Pilate and asked if he might have the body of Jesus.

Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead, and he sent for the officer in charge, and asked him how long it was since Jesus had died. When he heard the officer's report, he gave Joseph the right to have the body.

Then Joseph took down the body of Jesus from the cross and wrapped it in a linen sheet which he had bought, and laid it in a grave which had been cut out of the solid rock. He rolled up a great stone to close up the entrance of the tomb. Mary

of Magdala, and Mary the mother of Jesus were watching, and saw where He was laid to rest.

So when the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, and Mary (James' mother) and Salome brought sweet-smelling flowers to lay on His body. They started as early as possible on the day after the Sabbath, the first day of the week, and just as the sun was rising, they arrived at the grave.

"But who shall we get to move that huge stone for us from the door of the grave?" they began to ask each other, for it was a very heavy stone. Then they looked up, and there—right in front of their eyes—the great stone had already been rolled away! They crept in through the entrance, and inside they found a young man dressed in white clothes, sitting on the right hand side of the grave.

They were terrified of course, but the young man spoke to them gently. "Don't be so alarmed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was killed on a cross. . . . He has returned to life! He is no longer here! Look, here is the place where He was laid! . . . Now, lose no time. Break the news at once to His followers, and especially to Peter. Tell them, 'He has gone on ahead of you

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into Galilee, and you will find Him there as He told you.’”

At this, the women hurried out of the cavern and took to their heels, trembling and scared. But they were too terrified to speak, and said not a word about it to anyone! . . .

POSTSCRIPT

AFTER He had come back to life early in the morning on that first day of the week, the first person to see Him was Mary of Magdala. She was the woman who had been freed by Him from seven evil spirits. She made her way to the people who had been close to Him and were still mourning and weeping for Him, and told them the news. But when they heard that He was alive and that she herself had seen Him, they refused to believe a word of it.

Shortly afterward, however, He showed Himself, but with a different appearance, to a couple of them as they were walking on their way to the country. They also hurried back and brought the news to the others. But, again, no one would believe them.

Later on He appeared to the whole of the eleven together while they were having a meal. He spoke

to them, and blamed them for being so obstinate and so unwilling to believe those who had seen Him alive again.

Then He gave them final instructions. "You are to go out from this land into the whole wide world. Preach the good news of My gospel to everyone. Those who believe and are baptized into the new life will be secure and free; but those who refuse to believe will suffer. . . . You will know those who believe by the signs that go with them. By My power they will drive out all evil things; they will speak foreign tongues; snakes and serpents will not harm them; poisons will not hurt them; and when they put their hands on those who are ill, they will bring health and healing."

Now when the Lord Jesus had finished speaking to them, He was taken up into the unseen, and took His place at the right hand of God. And His people set out over all the world, and everywhere they told His story. And always their Master was with them, helping them in their work and proving the truth of their words by the wonderful results that followed them. Amen.